

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

September 20, 2023

The Honorable Pete Buttigieg
Secretary
US Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590

The Honorable Amit Bose
Administrator
Federal Railroad Administration
US Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary Buttigieg and Administrator Bose:

We write in strong support of Amtrak's Federal-State Partnership for Intercity Passenger Rail Grant Program application for the Chicago Hub Improvement Program (CHIP) for Chicago Union Station (CUS), which will revolutionize the future of Midwestern passenger rail.

CHIP is Amtrak's top National Network priority, as the City of Chicago is the nation's passenger, commuter, and freight rail hub, with more trackage radiating in more directions than any other city in North America. Chicago is at the center of Amtrak's Midwestern expansion plan, a 15-year strategy to connect dozens of cities in roughly 160 communities with Amtrak service. Trains that begin or end at CUS make up more than 90 percent of Amtrak's state-supported service outside of the East and West Coasts, and more than 50 percent of Long-Distance customers.

With the increased funding available through the enactment of the *Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act* (P.L. 117-58), now is the time to improve and expand Midwestern passenger rail, as regional partners already have committed \$218 million to the project. We ask the Department of Transportation to meet this moment in history by investing in the success of CUS, which serves 3.3 million Amtrak riders annually, along 16 Amtrak intercity rail lines, and more than 30 million riders across all rail services.

Many long-planned projects to improve and extend rail lines across other Midwest states depend on CHIP's improvements to the Chicago area, including projects within the Midwest Regional Rail Initiative and the Federal Railroad Administration's Midwest Regional Rail Plan. Examples of efforts across the Midwest that would benefit from CHIP's implementation include:

- **Illinois:** Elimination of antiquated train maneuvers that will enable travel time reductions of 10-15 minutes between Chicago and Champaign/Carbondale. This change also paves the way for St. Louis and Texas trains to transition to Metra's Rock Island line, ensuring faster and more reliable service to Joliet;
- **Indiana:** Improvements will facilitate the creation of faster service between Chicago and Indianapolis, while upgrades in southwest Michigan will permit more efficient movement, and thus expanded service, between northwest Indiana and points in Michigan;
- **Michigan:** Upgrades and travel time reductions to state-supported services including the *Wolverine* (Chicago-Detroit/Pontiac) and *Blue Water* (Chicago-Port Huron) lines;
- **Minnesota:** Establishment of Minnesota's new *Great River Service* between Chicago and the Twin Cities;

- **Missouri:** Improvements at CUS will improve the passenger experience of *Lincoln Service* riders, thus providing more attractive service to St. Louis, which in turn will feed more customers to the *Missouri River Runner*;
- **Wisconsin:** Expansion of *Hiawatha* service (Chicago-Milwaukee) to create new corridors to the Twin Cities via Madison and Eau Claire, and a new service to Green Bay.

CHIP fulfills the Biden Administration's goals to reduce emissions and promote equity, as it will spur broad-based economic growth across the Midwest. CHIP will allow Amtrak to upgrade and expand its services to communities and riders who lack frequent and reliable intercity rail transportation. It will provide code-compliant, accessible platforms in preparation for the anticipated growth of both intercity and commuter ridership.

The full scope of Amtrak's application, totaling more than \$1 billion, proposes several investments that will address transportation challenges and create a strong foundation for reducing travel time, expanding service, and meeting the current and future needs of customers of both Amtrak and its partners. As preliminary engineering and design begin on these projects, Amtrak will work with both the FRA and all relevant freight railroads to ensure that improvements benefit all parties. CHIP includes the following components:

Chicago Access

- *St. Charles Air Line (SCAL) Connection:* Building a direct connection between CUS and the SCAL (component #1).
- *Yard Property:* Purchasing and outfitting yard property near CUS (component #2).

CUS

- *CUS Mail Platform Reactivation:* Reactivating the High-Level Mail Platform at CUS for passenger use (component #4).
- *CUS Platform Capacity Expansion:* Making platform and track adjustments (component #5).
- *CUS Trainshed Ventilation:* Advancing Amtrak's ability to address the urgent need to remove failing plenums and to address code related emergency smoke evacuation standards (component #6).
- *CUS Concourse and Mezzanine:* Making improvements to the CUS concourse and mezzanine (component #7).

Michigan

- *Niles-Glenwood Double Track:* Restoring 16 miles of double-track on the Amtrak-owned Michigan Line infrastructure between Niles, Michigan and Glenwood Road, Wayne Township, and Michigan along the Amtrak Wolverine and Blue Water lines (component #8).

We ask for your full consideration of Amtrak's CHIP application to improve intercity, commuter, and freight travel, as well as strengthen the long-term sustainability and growth of the Midwest and the entire nation.

Please do not hesitate to contact us with any questions.

Sincerely,



Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator



Tammy Duckworth
United States Senator



Tammy Baldwin
United States Senator



Mike Braun
United States Senator



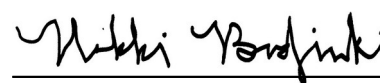
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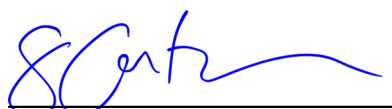
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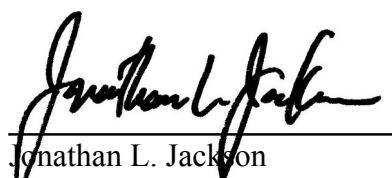
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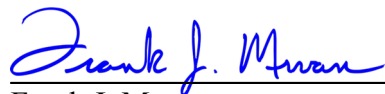
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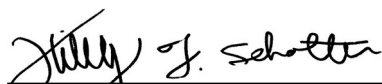
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